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ABSTRACT

The increasing abuse of drugs by youth and its impact upon the community are discussed. Some young people use drugs as a substitute for psychological or physical help or as a means to be "in". There are many other reasons for drug abuse depending on the predisposition and motives involved and these are summarized. To comprehend the present trend in the illicit use of drugs one needs to understand adolescent dynamics. Although they have physiologically acquired the capacities of adults they are socially treated as children and not allowed to demonstrate their independence in all spheres. Consequently much of the adolescents behavior is an expression of his effort to achieve some degree of freedom from parents. Todays young people are extremely uneasy in our achievement oriented society and are trying to search for self discovery through involvement with drugs since our institutions are not solving their basic identity needs. Because of the deleterious effects of drugs on human beings and society we must find the solution to drug abuse. In most cases, drug users have deep emotional and psychological problems and thus should be helped instead of ostracized by the law and society. (RSM)

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DRUGS & YOUTH - ITS IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

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After the invention of atom bombs, nothing has caused so much concern to the whole world than the danger of increasing abuse of drugs during the recent times. In recent times, we have witnessed the appearance and increasing resort to new stimulants, new sedatives and new and powerful hallucinogenic drugs. According to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the non-medical consumptions of barbiturates ("barb", "goof balls", "yellow jackets", "sleeping pills", "red devils", "nembies", "blue heavens", "green dragons", "downers", "red birds", "pheenies", "tooies", etc.), cocaine ("cecil", "charlie", "snow", "sleighride", "cocoanut", etc.), amphetamines ("pep pills", "jolly beans", "A", "uppies", "bennies", "bambinoes", "eye-openers", "wake-ups", "jogs", "dexies", "sex", "speed", "bottles", "crystal", "footballs", "hearts", "truck-drivers", "co-pilots", "crossroads", "christmas trees", "crank", and "meth", etc.), heroin ("H", "dynamite", "junk", "stuff", "scag", "smack", "harry", "needle", "horse", etc.), morphine ("mary", "white", "mojo", "morph", etc.), opium ("hop", "high hat", "button", "tar", and "penyen", etc.), glue sniffing ("solvent", "jelly", "automobile", etc.) and psychedelic drugs such as marijuana ("smoke", "grass", "pot", "greifo", "hay", "boo", "weed", "tea", "stick", "reefer", "mary jane", "mary warner", "broccoli", etc.), hashish ("hash", "bhang", "ganja", "charas", "raisin", "hashan",

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"gum", etc.), L.S.D. ("acid"), morning glory seeds ("heavenly blue", "pearls", "pearly gates"), peyote, mescaline and S.T.P., etc. have assumed epidemic proportions among the people especially the youth. The people who indulge in "booster" and "psychedelic" drugs tend to claim that marijuana, hashish, L.S.D., mescaline, amphetamines, etc. fill them with joy and rapture and enrich their inner life. They call such drug taking as soul revealing experience that permits the individual to discover new and subtler aspects of their personality and to distill the impressions from the external world filtering through the effects of the drugs. The effects of these drugs mentioned above are multifold and the effects generally depend upon the type of drugs, the dose, mental state, age and personality make-up of the individual.

It will be timely as well as worthwhile to speculate on the possible reasons why the teen-agers are using the deadly drugs. Are they attempting to breathe in the breath of life and to anaesthetize the death anxiety (Gioscia, 1967)? Are they beset with anxieties from which the uses of drugs are simply the means of escape? Are they trying to achieve a sense of independence and defy the authority by indulging in drugs? Are they hoping to evade the challenges which face them with the coming adulthood? Or is the use of drugs a means of belonging to a group from their marginal status? Do they find that they cannot communicate to the adults because of generation gap and the drugs help them to bridge this communication barrier? Do they find their life dull and uninteresting that they must introduce into it a little adventure,

a little excitement? The answer is not an easy one and there is no one answer for all these problems. Young people use drugs for a variety of reasons depending on the predisposition and motives involved. Some are in need of psychological or physical help but are able to avoid personal contacts by indulging in drugs. More common today among the youth is the desire to be "in". The other chief reasons for the use of drugs could be summarized in the following:

a) Some young people use drugs because of peer pressures and for group conformity. They feel a need "to belong" with their peer groups because of their "marginal" status. They may be afraid to take them or may not want to use drugs but they are forced into it by the standards of the group. They fear that if they do not use drugs they just won't be "cool". Their dependency needs are met with their being dependent on the peer groups.

b) Some people use drugs to achieve some kind of security by belonging to a group and avoiding social ostracism. They think it is a "hip" thing to do. It might appear to them as a fad. You just do it because it is "in".

c) To some, use of drugs serves as an escape mechanism. Reality to them is too painful and too threatening. Under the influence of drugs they feel fulfilled. They attempt to escape temporarily from problems involving work, sex, career, family or interpersonal relationships.

d) Many young people use drugs just to fulfill the innate human curiosity. They have heard about them so much through the

publicity media that they want to see for themselves what the effects are.

e) Some people might use drugs as a means of overcoming social inadequacy or incompetency. By using drugs they might feel freer to express their thoughts or feel part of a group.

f) Many claim to use drugs for many of the problems confronting society such as alienation of the individual from his culture, value conflicts, man's search for truth and happiness (a search which in modern times seems to have lost meaning because of war, political strife, poverty, religious controversy, racial discrimination, etc.). In the midst of all these, man, the reasoning animal, is trying to find meaning in life. Is it little wonder then, that a portion of these searchers for truth and happiness have found an outlet - an escape route: psychedelic drugs. It may not be the answer to them but it is at least a temporary release.

g) Those who suffer from inferiority and inadequacy complex may use drugs to cover up their feelings of inadequacy. They feel that people would not want to accept them for what they really are so they want to change their personality.

h) The philosophical - intellectual types of people claim that they use drugs as a window for emotional and spiritual enrichment hoping that psychedelic drugs will act as catalyst needed to give new meaning and direction to life.

i) Some use drugs with the belief that they will expand their minds, experience new dimensions of thought and become more aware

of the environment which would be unattainable under ordinary circumstances. To some, the time distortion under the influence of drugs is a very unique pleasant experience. Drugs also increase the pleasure derived from other experiences and sensations - music, conversation and love, etc.

j) Some people use drugs to feel less inhibited in the sexual area and not feel guilty over their promiscuous behaviour because they can easily blame the drugs for their behaviour.

k) Some young people use drugs as a feeling of resentment of their parents and their way of life, or resentment of "establishment" in general.

l) Many young people indulge in drugs because of the circumstantial forces of our society, e.g. permissive child-rearing technique such as letting the child go into the world to inquire, to question and to search for himself, cast free from the one-directional channelling of an authoritarian home environment.

m) Some use drugs just for the sake of kicks.

n) To some drugs proved to be a unique opportunity for sheer excitement of exploring the unknown. Many teen-agers use drugs as a "status symbol".

o) Some use drugs from the feeling that at a certain stage in life one is intelligent and mature enough to take the responsibility of decision into one's own hands. To some drugs help to fulfill aspects of life which were repressed in earlier life.

p) To some, use of drugs can become a frequent topic of conversation with intimate friends; a chance to share personal experiences and secrets.

q) Some people use drugs with the belief that they will increase their sexual capacities and the accompanying pleasurable experiences.

r) A group of non-conformist use drugs as a kind of rebellion against society and the institutions society has created.

s) Drugs are illegal in North America. The excitement of doing something illegal, the companionship of friends who are with them against the "narcos" and the blissful "I do not care" feeling when under the influence of drugs help cement these feelings. Perhaps even for the satisfaction of defying the law of sneaking behind the backs, so to speak, of legality. In this way, creating a sense of achievement for having gotten away with something illegal - really a kind of excitement.

t) To some, drugs provide an escape from the reality of a harsh and cold world. Drugs to them become the magic carpets that whisk away the mind into unreality.

u) The younger people, especially the teen-agers, use drugs because they are basically bored with life and have nothing else to do. There is a great problem here because today's youth have so much free time and are exposed at an early age to such varied stimuli that they become bored in their adolescence.

v) Unfortunately, our institutions are not satisfying the basic identity needs of the adolescents, so they are turning to drugs. Adolescents are facing new problems. Firstly, there is an increasing

lack of communication between teen-agers and adults. The generation gap is widening. Secondly, the adolescent has no role to play other than to attend schools and colleges. With this come postponed independence and all its frustrations. Thirdly, due to college attendance and graduate study, the period of adolescence has been extended. This has caused the distance between generations to be greater than before. Another factor is that youth has become a culture of its own, interrupting the transmission of values across the generation. Furthermore, the society and parents do not "practice" what they "preach". For example, adults can indulge in sex, alcohol and gambling when they are depressed but these are supposed to be forbidden to the adolescents. So, when the adolescents become depressed they turn to the use of drugs.

So far we have discussed why young people do use psychedelic drugs and now we come to the point what type or types of people use psychedelic drugs. This is not also an easy question to answer. As there are various reasons for the use of drugs, so also there appear to be various types of personality make-ups who use drugs. Among them, curious, and adventure seekers, pseudo-intellectuals, non-conformists (hippies and yippies), dependent, immature, unstable, neurotic, passive-aggressive, character disorder, psychotic and psychopathic type of personality happen to be common. There are also a substantial number of scientists, researchers, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers who use drugs under supervision for first hand information and direct knowledge into the effects of those drugs on human beings. But

unfortunately during the recent times, a good number of emotionally maladjusted people are indulging in drugs in the hope of solving their problems but instead they are ending up in the psychiatric institution with psychotic-like breakdowns. To understand the present trend in illicit use of dangerous drugs among teen-agers and youth, one needs to be cognizant of adolescent dynamics.

Adolescence is a period when an individual in his teens approaches the culmination of his physical and mental growth. In a wider sense, the period of adolescence extends from the onset of puberty to the time when the individual is legally granted adult status. During the period of adolescence, physical and physiological changes give rise to a host of psychological, as well as psychosocial consequences. It is a period when marked changes take place in duties, privileges, status, social and economic roles and the relation with others. It is a period when hormones tend to help in generating some specific motives or drives, interests, urges, needs and heterosexual feelings. Under such conditions, changes in attitudes towards self, parents, authority and peers are sure to occur. The unfortunate paradox is that although the individual is physiologically an adult, they are socially treated as children. This unrealistic attitude puts them in a place where they can claim themselves neither as adults nor really as children. That is why, an adolescent is interestingly called by Lewin, a famous psychologist, a marginal man. They are expected to conform to the adult restrictions and mores by the parents, as well as, by the society but they are allowed very few privileges

and advantages which should come at adulthood. There is a wide gap between the time when they acquire the physiological capacities of the adult and the time when they are allowed to demonstrate their independence in all spheres.

Another interesting fact is that the child who has made a satisfactory adjustment in his infancy and childhood will nevertheless have some difficulties of adjustment in adolescence because the development of the ego is still far from complete and his super ego may be still too much a simple reflection of the parents' attitude during childhood and not yet sufficiently modified by the influence of social organization. The most distinctive stress-provoking situation of adolescence is parental domination in the face of growing need for independence. Many of the behaviour of adolescents are expressions of the effort to achieve some degree of freedom from the parents. In some cases, there are overtly expressed emancipating strivings, while in other cases those strivings take the subtle and indirect avenues of expression like truancy, gang formation, and abuse of drugs. In many adolescents, the defiance of parents is displaced to a defiance of other forms of authority. Truancy, vandalism and illicit use of drugs may become the expressions of adolescent's contempt for the rules and regulations which interfere with his independent adult status.

Another important factor for the use of drugs among the teenagers is the fact that our society holds certain beliefs to be inviolable even as it violates them adds other complications to the process of growing

up. Most young people have learned the lessons - love not hate, universal brotherhood not discrimination, equal opportunity, freedom of speech and action, the respect for and the basic worth of the individual. But our present day world is not like that. Ours is an achievement-oriented environment, dominating society which tends to value and reward intellectual performance to the exclusion of a life of emotion and feeling. Ours is a society which often tends to measure success and prestige in terms of material possessions which considers a young person privileged if he comes from a family which has a palatial home, heated swimming pool, several cars, bank balance and a summer cottage. Today's young people are extremely uneasy in this climate. They feel the strong need for deeper and meaningful experience in an increasing secular society. They want a personally meaningful part in a world which seems so full of hostility, discrimination, poverty, divorce, war and hypocrisy that the individual seems superfluous. They want a frontier in which to find adventure, challenge and an opportunity to prove themselves at a time when the only frontiers available for the many would seem to be the technology jungle or world within. In the midst of all these, the youth are trying to search for self-discovery and their identity through involvement with drugs, because our institutions are not satisfying the basic identity needs of the adolescents. The increasing abuse of drugs by the young people has made a tremendous impact on the society. To feel its impact one must look at the cultural aspects of the drugs and drug users.

Culture determines the kinds, amounts and the social acceptability of drugs. Religion, economics, class consciousness, group mores,

ethics and the availability of the drug will influence the acceptance or rejection of drug use. The Oriental who accepted it believed it gave them great mental calm and clarity, detachment, reserve and dignity in an over-crowded, under-developed, under-nourished country. These were the traditionally admired characteristics and if opium was the only way to achieve it, they approved it. The average life span was so short for them they wanted it to be as good as they could make it. In America opium made people docile, relaxed and sleepy and in a country whose culture highly valued aggressiveness, success, upward mobility the addict is labelled as lazy, shiftless, worthless and unreliable. For them alcohol seemed the perfect answer and achieved social acceptance. It make them feel more vigorous, aggressive and ambitious. To the Oriental, this was unacceptable. The American appeared to him as boisterous, aggressive, unmannered, undignified and lacking in reserve. Now marijuana and L.S.D. appear to have given alcohol keen competition.

Drugs are the most useful devices of modern medicine but at the same time threaten us because they are or may be addicting. Because of their effects on human beings and on a larger scale on society, we must find the solution for their use. We have yet to decide whether we think of the drug addiction problem as a crime or as a disease. If we say it is a crime then legal sanctions define its boundaries. If we may say it is a disease then we should be applying ourselves to determine the cause and strive for the cure and prevention.

This potential of addiction causes grave concern to parents who fear that their children may fall prey to addiction. They realize that the adventure of experimentation is often the beginning or doing the "in" thing, but that physical and psychological dependence may follow. They worry about the psychopathology that may develop with prolonged use as is the case with L.S.D. L.S.D. apparently may cause chromosomal aberrations and is this going to produce future mental or physical defectives? Marijuana can produce acute psychotic breaks, panic reactions and may produce responses that mimic L.S.D. Under the influence of marijuana, criminal behaviour is often participated in. Marijuana contributes to emotional disturbances, mental derangement. Its only bright aspects is that it does not cause addiction or physical deterioration. Schools and higher level institutions of learning are anxious about the drug habit being part of the lives of their students. It may permanently rob a student of academic success and may cause emotional disturbances and psychoses. The danger of experimentation with dangerous drugs is a great concern to the community and to the nation. The recent death of a 16 year old boy (after the inhalation of glue) in Saskatoon has stirred the whole community including the city council who are now trying ways and means to prevent the epidemic use of glue sniffing among the youngsters. It is interesting to note that the friends of the dead boy have organized a group to dramatize the danger of glue sniffing in the schools.

Once society has labelled the addict he sees himself as a self made outcast. He is morally degraded and cannot muster the power to face reality. He is no longer a child and yet he is not a functioning adult. Where does he belong? We have no position for him to fill. The social stigma connected with his label drives him back to indulgence in drugs in an attempt to avoid his difficulties. He feels helpless, inadequate and sees no hope in the future.

When he attempts to come back to his former social circle he finds he has little in common and a feeling of inferiority ensues. He has been out of touch as to happenings, his vocabulary is insufficient for communication and he gets no personal satisfaction. He finds himself looking for others who have the same problem and who can give him some understanding. In his way introducing others to the habit makes him feel as if he is doing something for others even though sometime the motive is quite selfish. If he should be in need the novice may share his supply or borrow money. The fellow addicts compensate for the loss of his non-addict friends.

While he is on the drug he feels fine and when off he is low. When low he feels very inadequate in his role as breadwinner, father, husband. His inability to hold a job makes him a poor risk for employers. When he does get paid he spends most of his earnings to purchase drugs to keep him going. Either way he suffers the pangs of guilt. In his inability to cope with reality he reaches out for a

dream, a happy experience where the cases of the day are forgotten and his world looks "rosy" and makes him feel that he is the master of the situation. The period of relaxation and emotional uplift makes him forget the attitude of the outside world. We are that outside world and how do we feel about this problem? Everyday is a dilemma for him what are we doing about it? Today is the time for action for tomorrow may be too late for many.

Personally, I strongly feel that the possession or use of drugs should not be criminal offence because in most cases the person has deep emotional or psychological problems that need to be solved and he should be helped instead of being ostracized by the law and society. I am strongly in favor of legalizing non-addictive drugs like marijuana but not amphetamines or heroin. Because of the present legality associated with drugs, the "pushers" can sell adulterated stuff or mix some addictive stuff with a non-addictive drug so as to make the users become dependent on drugs. Some drug users knowing very well that they have been cheated with adulterated drugs, still because of penalty involved they cannot bring this to the attention of the police or the law. The general use of addicting narcotic drugs should not be legalized as such because of their non-social consequences and the dangers the drug users may present to the society. These individuals should instead be helped to face and solve their problems. If drug use could be legalized and controlled by the government, the criminal effects associated with them could be

reduced but people would still not be solving their real problems. If the drug addict could be productive in society, maintain a well-balanced diet and an adequate supply of drugs - he perhaps would not deteriorate for years and the problems of crime associated with drug use would be less. But even the many drug users still cannot face modern life and its pressures and want to drop out, and so they would still have to be supported by the state. England has tried for a number of years with some success to treat the drug addict as a sick person and not as a criminal. The real thing to do is to bring the person back as a functioning person in society who can use his talents and be useful to society. The characteriological problems that led him or her to drugs should be removed as he or she slowly withdraws from his drug habit escapism.

It is an irony that L.S.D., a hallucinogenic drug which can bring psychotic reaction, is now being widely used as a successful therapeutic measure for the treatment of psychotics in many mental hospitals. Under supervision and with moderate does this drug can be a boon to human beings but large does and lack of professional supervision can be extremely dangerous and even fatal.

Before making a firm decision whether or not drugs should be legalized, intensive research is urgently needed as to their long range effects, addictive potentials, etc. Until such time, there is sufficient scientific facts as to the effects of drugs man should have the right to complete freedom over his body and how he wishes to use it as long as he is not interfering with society in any manner of negative value.

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